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# Objectives

- \* *Attendees will gain a better understanding of:*
  - \* *How to explore the varied and complex issues and needs of newly arriving African immigrant and refugee families*
  - *How to facilitate the effective transition of African immigrant and refugee families.*
  - *How to develop systems of care that are tailored to the unique needs of immigrant and refugee families.*

# Africans

The term *African* in the scope of this presentation refers to national origins rather than racial affiliation. It implies recent ethnic immigrants from the continent of Africa and first generation African Americans

# Some basic facts about Africa

Africa is a land of **many people, cultures, and languages**. It is the **second largest continent** - (after Asia)


- 54 countries

- \* - Over one billion people & **about 14% of the human population** and it **covers 20.2%** of the earth's land.

- more than 3,000 different ethnic groups

- more than 2,000 spoken languages

Africa is a **very rich continent** with some of the most valuable and sort after natural resources like **Oil, Gold, Rutile and Diamond**.

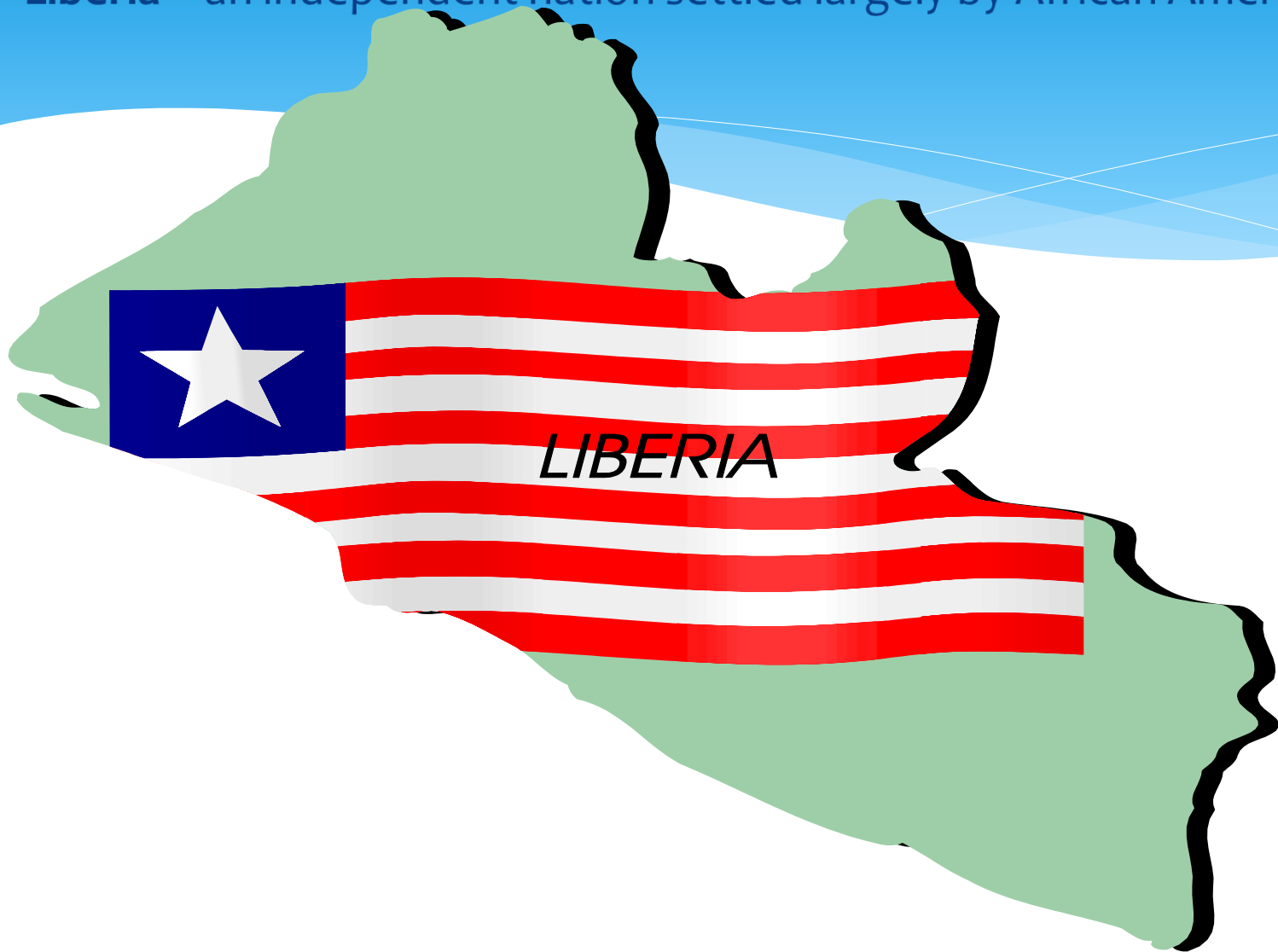
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- \* **Arabic** -(multiple dialects) is most common language - with about 170 million speakers
  - \* -In some countries, almost half of the population is **under 25 years of age.**
  - \* - Most Africans identify with either their tribes or nation/ country



Most of Africa was colonized prior to the  
mid 20<sup>th</sup> century

Only two African nations were never  
colonialized by European super powers

\* **Liberia** - an independent nation settled largely by African Americans



**An Orthodox Christian nation  
known in Europe as Abyssinia.**



**ETHIOPIA**



# Recent trends

- \* The last two decades have been bleak ones for Africa
- \* There have been major famine such as the **Ethiopian disaster of 1984** (one of the first reported) prevailed
- \* A series of brutal civil wars has resulted in massacre and mutilation – earlier in **Angola , Rwanda**
- \* More recently in **Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia and more**

# Africa in transition

- \* The flow of African **immigrants** to the US began **after decolonization** in the latter part of the 20th century
- \* This is often referred to as the “**fourth great migration**”  
Initially many Africans came to the United States solely to seek education and then return to their countries.
- \* However, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of **African immigrants** interested in **gaining permanent residence** in the United States. This is due to rapidly changing economic and political conditions in Africa.

# Map of Africa



- \* Most African refugees have lived through and are affected by the remnant of **war, poverty and diseases**
- \* A significant number of **children** have participated in war as **child soldiers**
- \* Others were **raped, tortured, victimized** and imprisoned
- \* Many lived in **camps/communal settings** for extended periods
- \* In Africa, there seems to be a general **lack of public awareness** or knowledge about the **mental health** and its consequences of either trauma or its impacts on individuals and public health

- \* Unlike groups such as the **Asian Bhutanese** who are leaving their country mainly because of government repression, denial of citizenship and claim that they want to ensure a homogenous culture
- \* Africans flee mainly because of **war, poverty, famine and diseases.**
- \* In the past five years, **over 200,000 refugees** have resettled into the United States.
- \* According to INS records, **one third of all refugee** to the US in 2007 were Africans
- \* The Washington area attracts **the largest proportional** Flow of Africans of any major metropolitan area in the United States

# African immigrants in the US

- \* The current estimated number of **African immigrants** in the United States is about **881,300** people
- \* Seventy five percent (**75%**) of the African immigrants in the USA come from **12 of the 54 countries**, namely-  
Nigeria, Egypt, Ghana, Ethiopia, South Africa, Liberia, Somalia, Kenya, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Eritrea and Cape Verde
- \* **55%** of immigrants from Africa are male, while **45% are female**
- \* Age groups with the largest cohort of African-born immigrants are between the ages of **25-34**.

# Metro Areas with largest Africans (2000 Census)

**Metros with largest African-born population (2000 Census)**

<b>Metropolitan Area</b>	<b>African Population</b>	<b>% Black total</b>	<b>of % of Total Metro Population</b>
<a href="#"><u>Washington, DC</u></a> , MD-VA-WV	80,281	6.1	1.6
<a href="#"><u>New York, NY</u></a>	73, 851	3.4	0.8
<a href="#"><u>Atlanta</u></a> , GA	34,302	2.9	0.8
<a href="#"><u>Minneapolis-St. Paul</u></a> , MN-WI	27,592	15.4	0.9
<a href="#"><u>Greater Los Angeles Area</u></a>	25,829	2.7	0.3
<a href="#"><u>Detroit</u></a> , MI	24,231	2.1	0.6
<a href="#"><u>Houston</u></a> , TX	22,683	3.1	0.5
<a href="#"><u>Chicago</u></a> , IL	19,438	2.4	0.7
<a href="#"><u>Dallas, TX</u></a>	19,134	3.6	0.5
<a href="#"><u>Boston</u></a> , MA-NH	17,344	9.8	0.7

- \* Currently, African immigrants account for **16.2** percent of the recent arrivals in the **Washington region**
- \* **Ethiopians** account for **one-quarter** of all African newcomers. Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Somalia follow, making up the top five African source countries

Ethiopians are ranked **third among new immigrants** in South Arlington's 22204 zip code and in the District's petworth / Brightwood Park (20011) neighborhood.

- They are **the single largest** immigrant group in the ethnically diverse **Landmark area (22304) of Alexandria, Virginia.**



## **\* Composition of recent African Immigrants to the Washington Metropolitan Area**

- \* Ethiopia 24.1**
- \* Nigeria 14.0**
- \* Ghana 12.2**
- \* Sierra Leone 9.6**
- \* Somalia 6.5**
- \* Egypt 4.5**
- \* Liberia 4.3**
- \* Morocco 3.8**
- \* Sudan 3.1**
- \* Cameroon 3.1**
- \* Other 14.7**

# New refugees to Hampton

01/01/10 -03/31/11

- \* Hampton
- \* Iraq 9
- \* Bhutan 48
- \* Burma 23
- \* Cuba 1
- \* Ethiopia 1
- \* Iran 3
- \* TOTAL 85 Trafficking

## \* New Refugees in nearby communities

### \* Charlottesville

- \* Bhutan 4
- \* Iraq 25
- \* Congo 4
- \* Burundi 3
- \* Burma 32
- \* Afghanistan 5
- \* Iran 1
- \* TOTAL 118

### \* Ronoake

- \* Bhutan 78
- \* Iraq 20
- \* Cuba 17
- \* Burma 7
- \* Somalia 1
- \* Congo 5
- \* TOTAL 128

\* Report produced 4/26/11 Sources: VNIS, WRAPS, CCC Arrival Reports

## \* **Richmond**

- \* **Bhutan 45**
- \* **Iraq 2**
- \* **Burma 3**
- \* **Jamaica 1**
- \* **Eritrea 1**
- \* **Uzbekistan 1**
- \* **Mexico 5**
- \* **TOTAL 58**

## \* **Harrisonburg**

- \* **Iraq 59**
- \* **Eritrea 8**
- \* **Ukraine 7**
- \* **Cuba 6**
- \* **Russia 2**
- \* **Ethiopia 1**
- \* **TOTAL 83**

# In Virginia

- \* **The minority** population in Northern Virginia has **doubled** in the past 20 years, mostly through immigration and **continues to grow**.
- \* Areas in Virginia that have seen the most new immigration, include **Alexandria City, Arlington and Fairfax Counties, Loudoun and Prince William counties**, and lately **Harrisonburg, Richmond and Charlottesville** which are also among the nation's fast growing counties
- \* Some other **large enclaves** consist of Ethiopians, Nigerians, Somalis, Sierra Leone and Ghanaians.

# Other recent refugees

- \* Whiles **African immigrants** have mainly settled in the N. Va. Areas of Alexandria, Arlington and Fairfax, others have settled in clusters in other areas as follows:
- \* **Bhutanese** –Hampton, Roanoke, Charlottesville, Richmond, and Newport news
- \* **Iraqis** – Newport news , Harrisonburg, Richmond, Falls Church and Charlottesville
- \* **Cubans** – Newport News, Harrisonburg, Roanoke

# Language

- \* Africa is the **most multilingual** continent in the world and has over two thousand spoken languages, according to estimates UNESCO
- \* Most Africans **speak multiple languages** well
- \* Most countries utilize either English, Arabic or French as their **official Language**
- \* **English speaking** African countries mainly utilize the Queen's (British) English

# African Dialects and tribes

- \* **Tribes** are distinct **African language groups** - with cultures varying from tribe to tribe.
- \* A tribal cultures can be identified by such things as dress types, jewelry, art and crafts, and celebrations such as courtship, weddings, initiation into warrior groups, coming of age, feasting, funerals, childbirth and other traditional celebrations.



# Dialects and Tribes

- \* **Dialects** are **accepted linguistic** (tribes) varieties with different or unusual pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar from the standard language. They are accepted sub forms of languages which are generally compressible.
- \* There are **thousands of recognized** African dialects. A single country (**like Nigeria**) may have over a hundred recognized dialects.
- \* **Krio/Patwa** or broken English – is the most common dialect across Africa . It is a combination of about **15 languages**

# African Culture

- \* **Culture and religion** - are deeply intertwined in the African way of life
- \* **Rich and diverse** - culture varies so much that it not only changes from one country to another, but within individual countries there are many different cultures with tribes and religious groupings.
- \* Most cultural activities centers on the **family, religion and/or specific ethnic tradition**.
- \* **Art, music, and oral literature** serve to reinforce religious and social patterns.
- \* **African Proverbs** offer wisdom and poetry in just one sentence. Proverbs play an important part in African cultures all across the continent. The beauty of proverbs is **the universality of their meaning**, everyone can relate to them in some way, on some level. Yet they are also uniquely African and help us **gain an insight into African culture....**

# Religion/Spirituality

- \* Africans are **spiritual and honor** various **religious** beliefs, practices and traditions.
- \* African immigrants practice a diverse array of religions, including **Christianity, Islam, Shamanism, Judaism, spiritualism, witchcraft and various traditional African** and world religions.
- \* However, the largest African immigrant religious groups in the United States are made up of **Pentecostal / Charismatic Christians and Muslims** respectively.

# Religions and traditions

- \* Religious traditions and institutions are **pluralistic**.
- \* Facilities are seen not only as religious institutions, but mostly also as **civic centers**.
- \* These institutions serve as **central to persevering ethnic identity** among these communities.
- \* They are also **central networks facilities** and **provide services** such as counseling, shelter, employment, financial assistance, health services, and even real estate resources.

## Religious practices

- \* **Islam** is one of the most popular religion in **Africa, Asia and middle East**
- \* There are **various types of Muslims**, but in general are traditional and family oriented
- \* The Pentecostal/Charismatic form of Christianity is also very popular, **born-again** sect that emphasizes holiness, **fervent prayer**, charismatic revival, proximate salvation, **speaking in tongues**, baptism of the Holy Spirit, **faith healing, visions, and divine revelations, spirit possession**, divination and **ancestor worship**.

- \* Followers of **traditional African** religions may pray to various **secondary deities** as well as to their **ancestors** and various forms of **idols**.
- \* According to them, these **secondary gods** serve as **intermediaries** between humans and the creator God.
- \* Most African believe in a **single creator God**. Some people also deify entities like the **earth, the sun, the sea, lightning, or Nature**.

# Traditional healers

- \* **They are very well respected as their roles are pluralistic**
  - \* Their role is typically **broader than** that of a contemporary medical doctor.
  - \* The healer **advises, diagnoses** and heals in all aspects of life, including **physical, psychological, spiritual, moral, and legal matters**. He understands the significance of God, the gods, ancestral spirits and the reality of witches.
  - \* They **administer drugs** (roots, barks, leaves and herbs) pharmacology and many are believed to have **psychic powers** .
  - \* They serve as **consultants for multiple issues** as they are trusted and highly respected .

# Family dynamics- cultural and Social implications

Initially, **life for African** immigrants can be **extremely difficult** in the US

They are often **challenged** by various **non traditional** structures, systems and processes

They are challenged by the process of acculturation, **parenting**, religion, relationships, **western structures**, laws and policies, **Mental health** concerns such as isolation, depression, stress, grief and loss and daily living



## \* **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FAMILY**

- \* Traditional Family Style – **Hierarchy**(male dominated)
- \* Importance of the larger kin group (**extended family**) beyond the nuclear family and including the community.
- \* Dedication of the extended family to the **raising and support of children.**
- \* Lack of **public display** of affection especially during courtship.
- \* Care and respect for the **elderly/authority.**
- \* Marriage is a **series of interrelated traditions & commitments.**
- \* **Polygamy** (often informally) maybe accepted as a desired measure of social success or status; male access to younger women and female division of labor.
- \* **Constrained communication** between spouses and parents and children.

- \* **Educational** attainment and **social status** are respected
- \* Traditional **family observances** are important
- \* **“We”** takes precedence over **“I”**
- \* **Religion and spirituality** are fabric of family life
- \* Family **times and activities** are honored
- \* The family is the **central support system** - (social services agency) – no CPS or govt. involvement in family life

# Parenting and child rearing













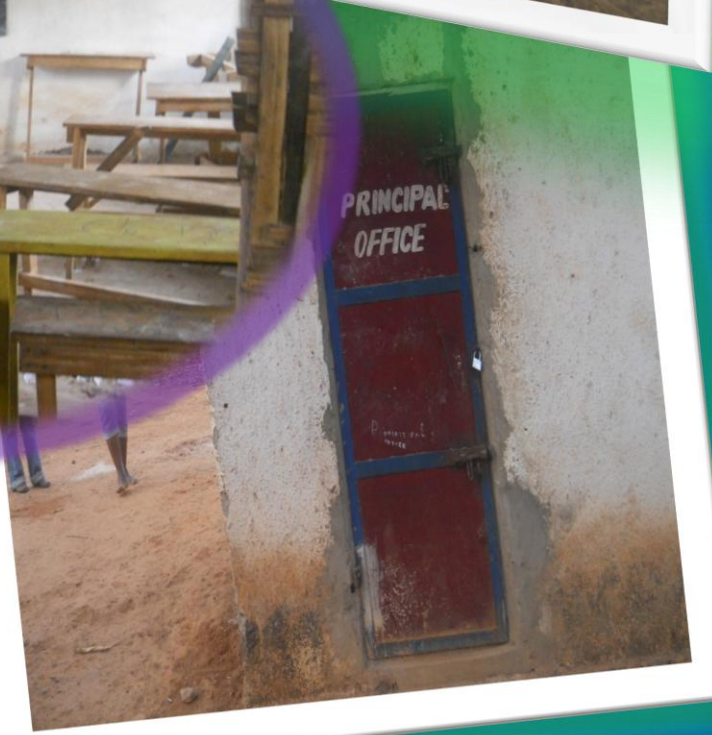
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## Parenting and child welfare

This is a primary responsibility of both the parents and extended family community

Parents are often **not as expressive and vocal of their feelings** towards their children mainly because of cultural norms.

They may some times **utilize corporal and “bizarre”** types of discipline

They may present as insensitive to the feelings and needs of their children because of **cultural norms and limitations**

Until recently, **extracurricular activities** were seen as basic entertainment and irrelevant in the education arena

- \* Some parents/ethnic groups treat children differently **based on gender**
- \* Teachers/educators have a **lot of power and authority** over the children
- \* Parents entrust the **school system** with more **authority** and responsibility for the socialization and discipline of their children

# Parenting Type

## \* **Authoritarian/Totalitarian parenting**

This is a **restrictive, punitive** style in which parents exhort the child to follow directions and to respect their work and effort.

- \* Parent is **strict, demanding and controlling** but not responsive.

Parent **expect much** of their child but generally do not **explain the reasoning** for the rules or boundaries.

- they expect them to **conform and comply to rules** and directions
- there is little or **no open dialogue** between parent and child
- often **more likely to punish or spank a child** rather than discuss the problem

# Assertive Democratic Parenting

Also called 'balanced /new wave parenting''

- \* The parent is **demanding but more responsive to the child**
- \* This is characterized by a **child-centered approach that holds high expectations** of maturity.
- \* Parent can be **understanding of child's feelings** and teach them how to regulate them.
- \* They often **help them to find appropriate outlets** to solve problems.
- \* It encourages children to be **independent but** still places **limits and controls on their actions.**
- \* Extensive verbal **give-and-take is allowed**, and parents are warm and nurturing toward the child

# Cultural Gap and Resettlement Issues

## **Documentation and legal status in the USA**

- \* **Multiple mental health and medical needs**
- \* **Culture shock and disorientation** (of being in a new/ strange/ foreign environment).
- \* **Language**
- \* **Education and literacy** ( concepts and processes)
- \* **Housing**
- \* **Acculturation and Community engagement**
- \* **Employment and Finance**
- \* **Family issues** (dynamics and social/legal implications)

# Working with African Immigrants

## \* **Communication**

Verbal and non verbal

Language-

Basic vs. Standard

Literate vs. Illiterate

Translation vs. Interpreting

Dialects vs. Slangs

Cultural values and norms

# In Treatment

- \* Every case is **different** and must be **treated individually**
- \* Service model should **be holistic** with consideration for **alternative forms** of treatments
- \* Treatment approaches must **involve culture, gender and age** sensitive psychotherapeutic approaches, and include **social support** and affordable medications where indicated.
- \* Specific **Communities** (as opposed to individual alone) needs to be **sensitized and educated** by developing programs and, processes with infrastructures that are viable for the implementation and reconstruction of those communities.

# Challenges to service

- \* The average refugee **does not willingly disclose information** about mental disturbances, such as depression and nightmares.
- \* Some ethnic groups find **disturbances to be socially unacceptable** and **prefer to deal with the issues at home**.
- \* There is a **cultural gap** between the types of **treatment** for mental disorders and most African **client's perspective**
- \* Many of the refugees **do not understand** and therefore do **not trust** the Western “**talk therapy**” method.
- \* Some individuals **prefer** to practice **traditional/spiritual** exercises/ therapies in order to relieve their stressor or symptoms



- \* The idea of **mental health**, counseling and therapy **is foreign** and often **carries negative stigma** to the African immigrant
- \* Immigrants often **have difficulty conceptualizing** and adequately **discussing mental health** needs and concepts such as Trauma, stress and depression.
- \* There is a **big need** for mental health services and providers that are both affordable and culturally relevant.

# Case Studies Discusson

## Scenario -I

- \* Fatima is a 38years old naturalized US citizen, who is married with three kids. She promised her older brother, a military personnel she would care for his children. Fatima's brother is brutally murdered in the presence of his children. Although Fatima does not get along with her sister in law, she sponsors her brother's 11 year old son, Yaya to come and live with her family in the US, against her husband's wish.
- \* Yaya who lived through the war in Sierra Leone had began to abuse alcohol and other illegal substances. Further he had not attended school for over three years and lived on the streets for a while and never received any mental health services. In the US, he is enrolled in school and placed In the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. He is inappropriate at home and in school (i.e. lack social skills, problem behaviors, communication and educational difficulties, steals and lies, wets his bed and has nightmares). Yaya does not like going to school,he doe s not get along with other kids including his cousins and states he prefers to live with a foster family. He does not want to return to Sierra Leone. Meanwhile CPS becomes involved, Fatima is now having serious problems with her spouse and children, the school and CPS are alleging abuse/neglect. Fatima's job is threatened because of tardies and low productivity issues. Fatima is not open to services, she is embarrassed in her community and alleges that Yaya is a witch and is possessed by the devil. She states that Yaya inherited witch craft from his mom, who she claims has been trying to destroy her through witchcraft.

# Scenario -II

Osina and her three children, Naffie -17yrs and Cabbisa -9yrs old and Razak 14yrs (two girls and a boy), were resettled in the US about two months ago. They are still undergoing immigration processing and do not have proper documentations. Osina is unemployed and currently lives in a two bedroom transitional housing unit. The children's schools as well as the neighbors are complaining of their "strange and bizarre" behaviors. It was reported that Cabbisa was disrespectful towards her older brother who by virtue of his gender is considered the head of the girls. Based on tradition, Razak decides to discipline Cabbisa by using the belt to "flog" her, and left marks and bruises on her. The neighbors hear Cabbisa crying and noise from them and call the police, who ultimately called CPS. Osina is charged and the children are devastated, and refuse to cooperate with law enforcement/ CPS. They attempted to take the children into care, but the children protested, stating they want to remain with their mother and no one else. In court, Cabbisa mumbles and rolled her eyes. The mother becomes upset and alleges that Cabbisa is being disrespectful to her. Osina slaps Cabbisa in the presence of the Judge and others. All attempts to briefly separate the children from their mother for questioning was unsuccessful as the children refused to be separated from their mother. All four of them sobbed openly and spoke in their dialect. The children are ordered to undergo psych evaluation and counseling. The mother, Osaina is ordered to undergo psychological testing and treatment. She refuses to be compliant or speak with anyone but the Pastor from her country. She raises her bible and says that God is her attorney and he will vindicate her.



Open discussion of cases

Questions and answers

# Quick Tips for Helpers

- \* Present your self as you are – A HELPER

- \* Be respectful and open

- \* Set up communication

Use basic (everyday) language and be ready to use culturally relevant approach, model and examples in the process

- Identify yourself and your agency
- Explain your purpose
- Engage client by soliciting responses & feedback
- Clarify your role and the role of others (be realistic)
- Explain processes and procedures clearly

- Listen effectively (verbals and non verbals)

Client Narrative/story – Powerful tool in this process

Clearly outline plan of action to include documents and handouts

Utilize cultural resources as necessary

- \* Establish clear and effective line of communication
- \* Prepare to utilize client as ambassador/ community resource
- \* **REMEMBER:** Every encounter/situation is unique and must be handled as such. It is also an opportunity for learning and broadening your personal and professional Horizon.

# Direct Services & Resources

Brief discussion of direct services  
and  
community based resources  
for  
immigrants and refugees

THE ROOTS OF ALL  
SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS  
LAY WITHIN  
THE FOLDS OF CLEAR AND  
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COMMUNICATIONS







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